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Title

The Jews grip their meager ration of bread, their bony hands shaking in the cold. They take small bites, weary of wandering eyes. As the last crumb slides down their throats, their skeletal bodies cry out for more. Thousands of black bodies sit chained to each other, their wrists sore, their throats dry, and their stomachs empty. They open their mouths wide as a few drops of water are poured from a communal jug down their parched tongues. Unlike a scene from a horror film, this moment is a terrible reality for millions of imprisoned or enslaved Jews and African Americans. Day and night, hunger controls their actions, is their main motivator. Not simply the hunger for nourishment, but a hungry for freedom, an escape from the prison that holds them captive both mentally and psychologically. For these unfortunate souls, hunger comes in many forms, but apart from their religion is the one persistent ache that binds them all together. In the novels Night by Elie Wiesel and The Glory Field by Walter Dean Meyers, the characters’ hungers for life and for freedom are themes echoed similarly throughout both books; and though written by different authors during varying time periods they draw parallels on many levels. But, while both novels stress the theme of their characters’ hunger for God they disagree on the specific relationship they will have with Him.

As the young African sits chained to the floor of the sweltering wood ship and the young Jewish prisoner lays frozen on the metal floor of the rattling train they both concentrate on taking the next breath that means they are still alive, both think of their missing family, but when both lose control they stray into the dark and dangerous void where a hunger for sustenance and the opportunity to continue living fills their every waking thought, an unquenchable desire that waits patiently for its chance to consume them. While unknowing adolescents may joke about starving for lack of a proper breakfast, most have never been subjected to all out hunger, where the next meal (or lack of) could mean the difference between life and death. “No one knows they are fortunate until they become unfortunate” is a quote that comes to mind when we think of the unsuspecting Jews who despised their lives in the ghetto or the African boys who grew upset after losing a game against friends. While they never could have suspected what was to come, they never fully appreciated the value of what they had both physically and metaphorically before being in enslaved. In the concentration camps of Europe it was all the prisoners could do to stay